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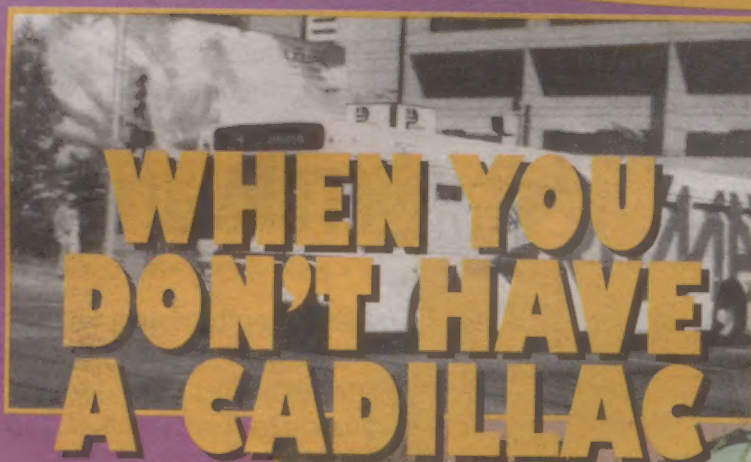
# Our Voice

The spare change newspaper

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## WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A CADILLAC

► You still need to get around.  
Stories from Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg see page 6



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**Talking Back**

Should public transit be cheaper and subsidized more?

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## NEWS • of the World

### Flying priest crashes church roof

Christians have been getting all parachuted up. In Whitby, Sister Marjorie of St. Hilda's Priory has made her first free-fall parachute jump - aged 75. In Australia, meanwhile, a priest made a dramatic parachute descent dressed as Jesus. Minister Bruce Spool, 53, of Canberra, undertook the jump to raise money to mend his church roof. "It was a toss-up between being Jesus or a koala bear," explained Minister Spool, "but Jesus won in the end, as he always does." Suitably attired in a white smock and false beard, and accompanied by four altar boys

dressed as cherubs, the plucky priest duly leapt from a plane and plummeted towards his parish. Unfortunately, however, whilst descending, a freak thermal dragged them off course and deposited them, with cruel irony, on the very roof for which they were raising money, destroying the one part which didn't require repair. "Perhaps I should have gone as a koala after all," mused a melancholy Father Spool.

### Dangerous acorns in the dark

It's all been going horribly wrong with toys. In Hampshire, Christopher Dighton, aged five, phoned 999 after his mother locked up his teddy. "The situation has been stabilised, and no arrests were made," commented a police spokesperson. In America, meanwhile, a man was almost killed when Sherman the Friendly Tree Man went out of control. Inventor Matlock Snubbins, 63, of Wyoming, had spent three years developing Sherman, a five-foot electronic playmate in the form of an anthropoid oak tree. "He could walk and talk, and cuddle you with

his branches," explained an enthusiastic Mr Snubbins. "He could shed his leaves, and make his acorns glow in the dark." Convinced that Sherman was the "greatest toy ever invented", Mr Snubbins had invited a group of businessmen to his workshop for a demonstration. "Things started off OK," he explained, "but then he seized me in his branches and wouldn't let go. I tried to fight him but he kept slapping my face with his roots and then the acorns exploded." He is now recovering in hospital. "I never knew trees could be so naughty," said the dis-

### Bind robber gets away with loot

Blindness shouldn't stop you from leading a normal, active life. Witness John Turton of Arizona who, despite being 100 percent blind, was recently awarded a gun license. "If someone points me in the right direction I can usually hit the target," he boasted. Equally determined was blind bank robber Carlos Bardini of Lisbon, who carried out a daring raid despite being unable to see what he was raiding. Mr Bardini, 41, had been helped into the bank by a conscientious pedestrian, whereupon he drew

a gun and ordered the staff to hand over their money. "It was strange," recalled one cashier, "because he was looking at the broom cupboard rather than the counter. You don't argue with guns, however." The money therefore was handed over and Mr Bardini duly escaped into the lavatory before realizing his mistake and emerging again to grope his way to the proper exit. Amazingly he got away with it, and was only arrested after a tip-off from his ex-wife. "I'm not bad at Ping-Pong either," he declared proudly.

### Superhero practises tantric yoga

It's been a week of not inconsiderable stuckness. In Halifax, England fishermen rushed to the aid of a four year old boy after the latter trapped his arm in a fruit-machine pay-out chute. "He was plump, and the chute was narrow," explained one rescuer. More bizarre were events in Houston, where firemen rescued a man wearing a crotchless Batman costume. They had been contacted by a neighbour after the latter had heard screaming from the flat next door, and had arrived on the scene to be met with a man's voice crying, "Help me, please, I'm upside

down!" Suitably clad in oxygen masks and hard helmets, they had battered down the door, whereupon they discovered Mr Norman Weeds in a most unusual predicament. "He was suspended from a chandelier," explained Fireman Tip Fendry. "And dressed in a Batman costume. The crotch appeared to have been cut out and he was extremely aroused." Sniggering firemen freed Mr Weeds with bolt-cutters and baby oil, whereupon he made them a cup of coffee and they left. "I was simply practising my tantric yoga," said the adamant superhero.

*Above articles compiled by Paul Sussman in The Big Issue, London England's street-sold magazine.*



# VENDOR • Profile

BY BARBARA LAUBER

## MY NAME IS RORY, AND I HAVE A STORY

Rory created his alter ego, a gnome character he calls Roar Gnomian, "the Great Gnome," to amuse the child of a neighbour. A toddler, Mia enjoyed Rory's rhyming stories about a gnome who came to clean up the garden so that a little girl could play safely. Rory felt the character growing on him and eventually designed a costume for himself—a blue jacket, tights, boots, a belt and a pointed black hat, and of course his trademark bushy beard. A relative sewed the costume for him.

The Great Gnome really is an extension of Rory's personality—"My character is how I want to appear as a person. He's nice and doesn't hurt anybody. He's a person of good nature. He loves life. He's humble. He's not scared to learn. He's not afraid to make a mistake."

Rory has developed several other gnome characters, including the Gnomester, a mischievous and naive young gnome, the RoboGnome, who teaches children safety tips in rhyme, and the Gnamsters, jumbo-sized gnomes.

Just as a leprechaun leads the way to a pot of gold, Rory hopes his gnome characters will bring him prosperity. He'd like to earn money performing a storytelling routine as a talking gnome. He has his first booking in September, at a Salvation Army picnic. His other dream is to be married someday, with a stable life and a permanent home.

Rory grew up in Newfoundland and joined the military at age 19. He was posted to Calgary and later to Germany. He worked as a radio operator in the forces. In Germany, he became addicted to "Spiel machines"—the German equivalent of video lottery terminals. Rory says that the discipline

of army life and the steady paycheque helped keep his addictions from getting out of control.

He left the armed forces after nine years because of a host of medical problems, including tendonitis in both arms from operating teletype machines. After the military, he worked as a security guard for a year and then entered an electrician apprenticeship program. Rory couldn't keep up with the studying because of pain from his injuries. Rory describes himself as a "grumpy man at that time, barking and complaining." "Addictions make you selfish", Rory explains.

Rory worked at various low-paying jobs and was on and off Unemployment Insurance for the next few years. He says he had trouble handling the adjustment from his \$30,000/year salary in the forces to living on a much smaller Unemployment Insurance cheque. Waiting for one UI cheque to come in, he picked bottles and slept outside in a sleeping bag.

Rory considers himself "99.9% cured" of his drinking, drug use, and gambling problems. He never entered treatment. He says he gave up his bad habits when he could no longer afford them. "Only I can better myself", is Rory's philosophy. "I don't ask people to feel sorry for me. I honestly believe I will make something good out of my life."

Rory is enthusiastic about **Our Voice**. "I'll always sell the paper as long as I'm in Calgary. This paper keeps me out of the soup kitchen line-ups. I don't have to go to the food banks for food anymore. I have my own apartment now. It's given me a life, this paper. I'm able to do things I couldn't do before." He considers the paper a "very good product. It teaches people a lot about reality. The cartoons are great. I like Soupline Bob." Rory would like to thank all the people who purchase the paper from him.



### The people who bring you **OUR VOICE**

This newspaper exists because of the efforts of the people who sell it to you on the street, the vendors. For our vendors **OUR VOICE** is a job that helps them to be independent and self-employed. Each issue we highlight one of our vendors in Vendor Profile to let you know a little bit about the people who bring you **OUR VOICE**. ♦

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- I will be sober at all times while working
- I will be polite to all members of the public
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## LETTERS

# No more landlord letters

Although I love your paper, I have a complaint to make about the August issue.

Please don't publish any more letters from landlords who are angry about welfare people. Although Leslie Miller certainly tried to explain his feelings, it's just the same old crap. He complains about tenants wrecking their suites and not paying rent on time, conveniently leaving out how many working people also do the same thing. From his letter you get the feeling he's watching every move a welfare person makes, if he carefully notes them buying cigarettes and taking taxis. Don't get suck in by these people who ARE prejudiced against poor people, no matter how much they protest that they 'just want their rent.'

Nobody needs to hear this stuff from your paper --there's enough hatred out there already. If you do it again, I will stop buying **Our Voice**.

Also, the article about the heroin addict by Laurie McCullough was just silly. And so was the one about the prostitute. Everyone knows the horror stories; how will this really help anyone living on the streets? Do you think some kid is going to read that article and change her mind about hooking? Necessity knows no laws, and also by the way, no fear. Do you think someone sitting in a door way is going to remember those graphic details and feel better about life? It just doesn't work that way --it doesn't work that way at all.

Debbie Kanga  
Edmonton



## Talking Back Are poor people unfairly dumped upon?

Our Talking Back question for September: Are poor people unfairly dumped upon? generated a lot of responses. Several of them were very short: Yes.

But others expanded on it a little:

Yes. Because people are valued in this society according to what they own, not what's in their hearts and their heads.

I often think that poor people are held under a microscope and society judges them very harshly. How poor people will dump on poor people, they'll understand the situation they are in but are very quick to criticize other poor

people. All this criticism does is take away from our need to examine the broader issues of why people are poor in our society. We need to support each other.

Calgary: Poor people are definitely unfairly dumped upon.

Yes. Because I am unable to work and welfare is trying to force me back and I'm not sure what's going to happen to me.

Call us with your opinion on this issue's question: Should public transit be cheaper and subsidized more?

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SEPTEMBER 15

1996



## Missing the Prime Minister

On August 17, 6 pm, I stood on the top step of the stage, about 15 feet from where Prime Minister Chretien was to deliver his speech. I was there to talk to him and then shoot him—take his picture—at the Fort Edmonton fund-raising event. Bagpipes announced his arrival. Thousands of people pressed forward with craning necks behind me. Suddenly I spotted him making his way to a semi-circle of chairs centre-stage behind the podium. With all the fuss going on, nobody was taking any notice of me. I sighted on the P.M. It was a perfect shot!

That's when the tables turned on me.

A large hand reached out and gripped my left arm, pulling down on my gray tweed sleeve, effectively immobilizing me. My camera now dangled down uselessly by my side. I looked up, into the eyes of a very large, blue-jacketed man.

"Press pass?" he inquired.

I shook my head in the negative.

"Then please move down the stairs." He pulled the sleeve of my jacket down to emphasize his point. He had me off balance. And I knew it.

Things did not end there. The giant let go of me and I made my way down the five steps to ground level, to where my black attaché case was snugly waiting against the stage wall for me.

I was disgruntled, to say the least. I picked the attaché case up and stood there, wondering about my next move. That's when the giant moved in on me again.

"Will you come outside with me and bring your briefcase with you?"

"Are you hassling me?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "But will you step outside and bring your case along?"

I looked at the crowd and said to the giant, "How do you propose to get through this mass?"

"Easy," he said. He moved his bulk and the crowd parted before him.

Once outside the tent and well onto the lawn where there were no people gathered, I stopped. So did the giant.

"Could you open your briefcase," he asked politely.

I put the case on the ground and released the clips. The contents of the case were fully displayed for him: a few promotional copies of the *Songs of the Street* poetry book and some copies of *Our Voice* lay naked before his searching eyes.

"Okay," he said. "I'm sorry to have troubled you."

But I was troubled. Who was this blue-blazered giant? "Do you have a card?" I asked him.

"Certainly," he said amiably, producing a card from his wallet.

It read: Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Bruce Bowman, Inspector, Prime Minister's Protection Detail Branch.

I felt a bit humbled. Also embarrassed about being singled out for scrutiny. But I made no protest. The man was just doing his job. Anyway, I missed the P.M.'s speech and the opportunity to have my picture taken with him. Time was, before he became Prime Minister, I could mix with Jean Chretien, and did so at different functions. But such personal exchanges apparently have gone by the wayside. This I regret. Has the P.M. lost touch with his humanity? Has his security detail gotten too zealous since their foul-up in the P.M.'s residence? Who knows? I only know that as a Canadian I should be able to talk with my P.M.

TOM HIND



SINCE IT'S A SPECIAL OCCASION I FIGURED WE'D TAKE SOMETHING BIG AND EXPENSIVE-- THE BUS!

**Our Voice**  
The spare change newspaper

## Getting on the bus

Poor people ride the bus and public transit generally. When the fares go up they feel it. This issue we look at different transit issues with stories from Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg. Thanks to Tom Hind, Kevin Rodkin and Maureen Keogh for the stories, and Andy Phillpotts for the editorial cartoon. It's the first of a few prairie-wide surveys we are going to try. They will be snapshots comparing situations in different provinces. Thanks to Michelle Logan and City Light News Calgary for the Meet the Street story on the back cover, a tough experience. Edmonton editor Tom Hind pulled together the snips for Words on the Street and wrote up his experience of missing the P.M. Calgary editor Barb Lauber got a great vendor profile with the "Gnomester". Page 9 starts a new longer story that we will be serializing over the coming months. We hope you enjoy *Kiss the Bride* from Laurie McCullough.

Linda Dumont drew us more cartoons, as did Derek Oliver, of Vancouver. We are happy to get Ed Gould's Concrete Jungle cartoon in again. Fellow Vancouverite Susan Andrews contributed the crossword.

Have an opinion? We take letters in writing, of course, or call our Talking Back number 1-800-882-5954. We're always happy for the feedback.

Keith Wiley

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**Our Voice**  
The spare change newspaper

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Opinions expressed in this newspaper are not necessarily those of **OUR VOICE**, the editors or publishers.



**F**irst thing I do, when I get my welfare cheque, is buy my bus pass, so I can get around. It costs a lot out of my cheque, but if you don't have the bus pass, what can you do? You can't go look for a job, or go to a job, or go anywhere.

**I**f you don't have a Cadillac you have to have public transportation, and for many people, single mothers, older retired people, or anyone who can't afford to run a car, the bus, public transit, is it.

**W**hen they raise the rates, that comes right out of the food money. It's got to. There's no other money.

I'm older and they say they are moving the bus stop over to the next block. Maybe I just won't be getting out much anymore.

**T**here are lots of people who just can't use a car. They depend on public transit and when it gets cut, reduced or more costly, they suffer, they are left out, and increasingly marginalized.



## 30% of Calgarians use public transit once a week

*By Maureen Keough in Calgary*

I support three children as a night cleaner," says Sheila who immigrated a few years ago and is a single mother. "I only work for minimum wage." Sheila has to pay for a baby-sitter five nights a week so she can work part-time in a building downtown. She can only afford housing in the far North East of the city. She admits that there have been times when she has barely found the money to pay for passes for all four members of her family. "I don't have a car to get us around, but you have to get to work and to school, so maybe we cut back on other stuff, like new clothes. . . . I've gone to the food bank. . . . We do what we have to."

For many, the cost of transportation is something that simply comes along with working and, in reality, living. If you or your family intend to be employed, volunteer, attend classes, socialize or even buy groceries, you must be able to get around. Citizens with lower incomes also depend on various forms of transport. Some people may not find it in their budget to own or operate a vehicle, and perhaps are not be able to afford the cost of public transit.

30% of Calgarians use transit at least once per week, and in total, about 56.3 million transit trips were made in 1995. Of the population which uses City Transit, an estimated 22% of customers earn under \$24,000. Those who fit into this category are considered to be "Lower Income Users."

City transit estimates that seniors made 5.8 million trips in 1995. A special seniors pass is available

for unlimited travel and is provided for a nominal fee of \$35 per year. (This compares to \$488 per year for twelve monthly passes.)

Although all of the services provided by City Transit are subsidized, the cost is still out of reach to some citizens. Many individual agencies have a limited budget for emergency transport available to clients, but the resources for these funds are often extremely limited and cannot possibly offer any sort of long-term assistance.

Frank Hoebarth, who is the Manager of Family and Community Support Services, identified the transportation programs in which Social Services is currently involved. First, there are provisions for senior citizens, visually impaired patrons and war veterans. These are under City Transit's jurisdiction. Then there is the Calgary Handi Bus Association and the Special Needs Taxi, where there is an income test to determine qualification.

Hoebarth says that although these particular projects are in place and there have been exceptions in the past for emergency subsidies, there is "no consistent subsidy program for low income people. He emphasized that lacking access to transportation "interferes with some people's ability to work. The issue has been looked at in the past, and probably will be in the future [but Social Services] has to find a balance and do what they can with available resources."

Edm  
Trans

by Tom Hine

The Edmonton most increased Single adults pay \$100 a month for their \$39 to ten bus rent rate of unemployment. Only welfare-sp rehabilitation for a subsi

Thankfully, Edmonton k rides for the from 9 am - Friday. The o work-seekers does not take areas of town found.

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The cost is so out of reach to some citizens.



# WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A CADILLAC

## Edmonton fares to rise Transit being phased out by 2003?

by Tom Hind in Edmonton

The Edmontonians that will be most hurt by proposed fare increases are those on welfare. Single adults are allotted \$17.00 a month for transportation needs out of their \$394.00 stipend. This amounts to ten bus trips monthly at the current rate of \$1.60 a trip. For those unemployed on welfare who are seriously looking for work, this is laughable. Only those with serious medical problems or enrolled in welfare-sponsored up-grading or rehabilitation programs are eligible for a subsidized monthly bus pass. Thankfully, for these unfortunates, Edmonton Rapid Transit provides free rides for them in the downtown area from 9 am - 3 pm, Monday through Friday. The only shortfall for work-seekers is that the free service does not take them to the industrial areas of town, where the work is to be found.

Walter Coombs, spokesperson for the Society for the Retired and Semi-Retired, had this to say about recent announcements about fare increases and service cuts: "The real issues that seniors have with city transit are proposed service reductions and

increasing distances between bus stops. For many seniors the latter will pose problems, especially during winter months, when it is icy and freezing outside."

At a recent rally at City Hall, Save Our Buses advocates were quite vocal about their concerns. "We need to increase the role of transit in the city, not kill it." "We need good bus service that's affordable for everyone." "City Council should be supporting the bulk of Edmontonians using the bus service, not those riding around in cozy cars." Edmonton City Council voted 11 - 2 in favour of the Horizon 2000 transit plan. The anticipated effects of Horizon 2000 are 500,000 fewer senior rides; 400,000 fewer student rides; 400,000 fewer commuter rides as well as other losses.

What choice have I got? I've gotta have a bus pass to get

## Winnipeg fares rising Transit use dropping

by Kevin Rodkin in Winnipeg

A major transit issue in Winnipeg is transit use by people with disabilities, and the decisions of Winnipeg Transit have sometimes benefited disabled people, but not always.

Many people with disabilities are on welfare or are poor and almost all use the Handi-Transit system which provides wheelchair accessible transportation for the cost of a regular fare. In 1994, city council began allowing Handi-Transit users to buy monthly bus passes instead of individual tickets; this saves frequent handicapped users money. Later on that year, city council began replacing all buses with wheelchair accessible buses, the idea being that this would both be more efficient and provide better service to disabled users who applauded the move.

In the past few years though, city politicians, arguing that our city has one of the largest debts of Canadian cities, have cut funding in many areas including transit. As a result, they argue, the expanding demand for Hand-Transit cannot be met and so usage of the service has been prioritized, with higher priority going to use for employment or health reasons. This often prevents disabled people from using the service to visit friends or see

movies. And, the city has increasingly contracted the service out privately, prompting protests from the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities.

Use of transit in general has declined greatly due to increased fares: There were seven million fewer rides made in 1989 than in 1987. These reductions appear not to come from reduced use among poor people, but rather from reduced use among people who own cars and use them more frequently.

People who don't own cars don't have this option and simply have to spend more on transit and less on other things. Cindy Breaker, who supports two kids on her factory-worker income knows this well: "What choice have I got? I've gotta have a bus pass to get to work. Everything gets more expensive and now I've got less money for the kids. It makes me damn mad."

Suggestions have been made to offer free bus service downtown, as was done three years ago in Seattle, and which increased ridership from the suburbs in that city. This would tremendously benefit the poorer people of downtown who are the most frequent bus users. Such a move seems unlikely, though, since free service in the highest area of use would mean a big loss of revenue.

## Prairie bus fares A big part of some budgets

City of Calgary bus fares have been \$1.50 since February, 1992. Passes are \$4.50 per day and \$48.00 per month.

Edmonton monthly bus passes are \$46.00 Toronto-\$78.00, Winnipeg-\$52.00, and in Vancouver-\$54.00.

Annual seniors' passes in Edmonton currently stand at \$25.00, though they will jump ten dollars each year between 1997 through 1999, at which time they will cost seniors \$55.00.

In Hamilton, Ontario seniors pay \$135.00, and most other cities either have no annual rate for seniors or they charge them by the month: Toronto-\$51.00, Winnipeg-\$30.80, Vancouver-\$33.00.

Between 1980 and 1990, transit fares in Winnipeg increased an average of 17% annually; the regular fare jumped from 85 cents in 1992, to \$1.35 in 1993. For children or seniors it's 80 cents.

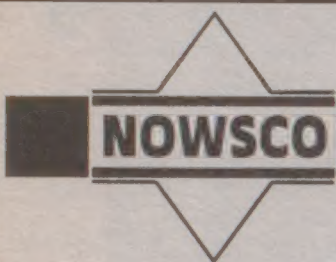




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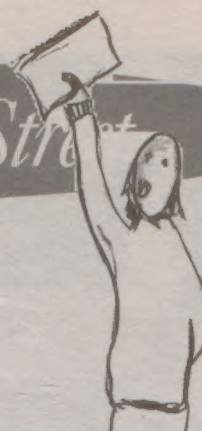
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## WORDS • On the Street



### A Toonie Day

If ten people were to pass by me today, two of them would not notice me. It's like knowing you're there, but they chose not to see. Of the remaining eight, five persons would give me a smile. Following the smile, two purchase a copy of Our Voice from me.

As people approach the corner of 104 and Whyte, just to the right of the doorway going into Uncle Albert's, you will find a friendly vendor — me — who seems to be exercising kinetics with his papers. Hand over hand motions with the paper is one way I have of attracting attention to them, and in the process, myself. If my juggling of papers only causes a smile, so what? A smile is better than nothing.

Sunny skies seem to bring out zealous people who are open to sharing dialogue with me as they go on their merry way. "On this particular day I had the attention of a father and his two little girls. Being impressed by the way I could move two papers hand over hand, while making sales, this kind gentleman stopped to ask about Our Voice.

When I see a parent with children, it brings out the best in me. Memories of what it was like to raise three young ones while I was putting myself through college reminded me not only of what it is like to be a single parent, but also what it is like to be broke.

When children's demands are many, and financial resources low, selling Our Voice is one way of meeting those demands.

Art Piché

### Baaaaa..... early morning work

Overheard at 7.30 A.M. recently in the Bissell Centre's casual labour pool: The employment counsellor yells out a work order: "Are there any sheep metal workers here today?" The response from a group of men: "Bahhh! Bahhhhhh!" Sheet metal, dear?

The Words on the Street column is a space for Our Voice vendors and friends to write short notes about life and their experiences.

## Our Voice to sell advertising in Calgary

Our Voice has just opened an advertising sales office in Calgary. "Calgary is an untouched market," says Richard Tomlinson, the new Calgary advertising manager. "The idea of advertising is that we're not asking for a charitable contribution. We're offering results-oriented advertising in a publication with monthly local sales of almost 9,000."

Since the paper is a prairie-wide publication, all advertising appears everywhere the paper is sold, from Edmonton to Winnipeg. All the revenue goes back to help make the newspaper self-supporting.

### Vendor update "The Bear" and Gladys

"The Bear" and his wife Gladys have been selling Our Voice for two years now. They were married on March 1, 1995 by Linda Dumont, an inner city pastor. Bear and Gladys were given full coverage in the April issue of Our Voice. We are happy to report that the husband and wife team are still happily together, and although Gladys is currently taking a break from selling, Bear still enthusiastically pounds the turf for Our Voice.

"I like selling Our Voice," says the Bear. "It's good public relations and I can present myself as a person."

Gladys reports that "selling Our Voice got her out of the house, out of herself, and she was able to meet people she hadn't seen in years."

When the two are selling as a team they go into active competition to see who sells the most papers in a given day.

"Do you know," Bear informs me, "the other day when I started to sell the poetry book, Songs of the Street, I was chased over half a block by a customer who wanted to buy one. That's the kind of customers I got. The new book is a killer. Bingo. It's going faster than hotcakes on a griddle!"

Bear's been in Edmonton since 1972. Currently you'll find him selling Our Voice from 7 am to 8 pm seven days a week outside either The Sun Life Building or The Army And Navy on 97 Street.

Bear has a vocal signature that many people recognize: "I tell 'em smiles are free. Give one to somebody that needs it."



# HIV

## Positive

### and a bus ticket to the edge of town

BY BARBABA LAUBER

**T**im Covington's head is shaved, except for a pony tail. His 190 lb. body is covered with tattoos. One tattoo spells out "F\*\*k You." Tim found this a particularly satisfying message to wear in jail. "They can take away your freedom, but they can't take away your tattoos." Tim's tattoos were done in prison with such ersatz equipment as a Walkman, a spoon, a guitar string, a pen, and India ink from the prison's arts and crafts supplies. Tim says the pain of being tattooed didn't bother him. "At least you feel the pain, at least you're feeling something. You're very numb in prison, except with your friends."

Just three weeks ago, Tim found out he was HIV positive. He had suspected he was positive because he had the symptoms—cold sweats, swollen lymph nodes. He was tested in January, but put off getting the results for months. Tim thinks he became infected from a blood transfusion in 1985. He has always used condoms and has never shared needles when using drugs. He has Hepatitis C as well, which makes him tired and has caused him to lose a lot of weight.

I met Tim at the office of AIDS Calgary. He had no money and no belongings. His bags had been stolen the night before. They contained his epilepsy and anxiety medications (both have street value) and all his money, from an emergency welfare cheque he'd just cashed.

When I left him, Tim had a city transit ticket and a day's supply of his medications.

His plan was to take the city bus to the edge of town and then hitchhike to Vancouver, where he has friends. Vancouver also has a well-respected AIDS treatment program at St. Paul's Hospital, which he hopes to hook up with.

Tim is tough. "You learn to be tough from the streets", he says. But he is a complicated, perhaps contradictory character. I spent an afternoon with Tim,

getting to know him. Whatever I expected from a man who has lived on the streets half his life, who has been jailed seven times for violent crimes, it wasn't the man I met.

Tim told me about growing up. Now 29, he was born in North Grimsby, Ontario. According to a Social Services report, his mother got him high when he was two, to see what would happen. By his count he has lived in 22 foster homes and 15 group homes. He remembers all but one of the homes as being abusive in one way or another. At one home, he was beaten with an electrical cord. At another, his older brother raped him. Tim says he heard over and over again,

#### Behind the Great Wall

When the night lights are glowing as the evening comes down,  
With my cigarette glowing as the old heartaches come round,

My problems are many, my chances are small,

'Cause I got no freedom behind the great wall.

My memories of loved ones return every night

As I lose track of justice and what is wrong and what is right,

'Cause the life of a prisoner ain't no life at all.

Just because my problems are many and my chances are small,  
I have no freedom behind the great wall.

By Tim Covington



you're no good for nothing, you're never going to amount to nothing. "I heard it so often I said it to myself in front of the mirror." He ran away when he was 14, and has lived on the street ever since.

At first Tim supported himself as a prostitute, both for gay men and older women. Later he got into dealing drugs, but only to regular customers. He didn't start anyone on drugs, he says.

Tim had played football and lacrosse in school and studied kung fu. He was a big kid, who took steroids to bulk up even more. He eventually weighed 265 lb., and he used his size to his advantage. He controlled "corners" in Vancouver—no one could work as a prostitute in certain locations without his permission. He offered prostitutes his protection in return for a cut of their take, perhaps \$20 from each \$60 trick. Tim says he was making \$100,000 a year from this protection racket and from drug dealing while he was still in his teens.

While in school, Tim organized "the geeks" to fight back against the school bullies. He has sympathy for the underdog. "Everybody had the right to be who they were," he says. Being willing to use violence on the street is a necessity, to maintain your "rep", but Tim disapproves of cruelty and abuse.

Tim says he likes to help people. He persuaded one street kid in Vancouver to leave her pimp and go home to her parents. In the special education school he attended, he befriended an autistic child, whose first words were, "Where's Tim?" "That's what I want to be", Tim says, "a good Samaritan."

But his most recent conviction, three years ago, was for beating his girlfriend. Tim says he "lost it" when he found her in bed with another man. While serving time in Dorchester Penitentiary, Tim and a friend started a prisoners with AIDS group.

Although he had not yet tested positive, Tim had seen many friends die of AIDS. The group lobbied successfully to have the entire prison population tested for AIDS and to have condoms provided to the prisoners. "They need condoms. Society doesn't care if they die or not, but I do," Tim said.

Tim cut back on his use of violence when he realized that what he was doing to other people was a lot like the abuse he had suffered himself. Now he asks himself, "Do I have to resort to being a mean person?"



# THE STORY • Begins

FICTION BY LAURIE MCCULLOUGH

I was in a Hotel at the south end of the drag. The bar was the Royal and I was on the quiet side. A woman with green eyes, brown hair and a faded jean jacket sat across from me. She said:

"I'd hustle on the street, for you."

Okay.

We drank beer and laughed until I said:

"I'd get a room and a case of beer but I've only got eleven dollars." and she looked at the table while she told me:

"That's alright. I've got ten." which was okay as hell because draught was forty cents and a room cost eight bucks. A case of beer was about seven. Never worked out, though. She kept saying she'd hustle on the street until I finally asked:

"Are you telling me you're willing to be my hooker?" so she must have misunderstood. She stood up and said, real loud:

"I don't know what you think I am, but I'm not THAT! Don't think I can't take care of myself, either, because I CAN!" before she stomped out, in a rage, and I was left to fend for myself. I met a black girl who insulted me because she was hating men. She showed me cigarette burns on her arms, told me she put her man in jail. The insult was funny as hell. I laughed, laughed harder. Her face opened up like a time lock safe and she told me:

"I DO like a man with a sense of humour." which made us a fine couple after that. Guess her sense of humour got her beat up by someone with no sense of humour.

Nothing came of our evening. I got so drunk she took me to a tiny, dingy apartment. We slept on the couch. She had no bed, no bedroom. When I woke up I thought how amazingly pretty she was, left twenty bucks in her purse. You'd give her twenty bucks if you saw the way she had to live. I ran into her a couple weeks later. She turned out to be a nice person. I guess she got over the creep who burned her. She wanted to live, some. We drank beer, spent the night in a restaurant under the Empire Hotel drinking coffee, talking, laughing.

I got married in the spring of my twenty-fifth year. She was seventeen and everybody, including me, believed her when she said she was twenty. Three inches shorter than me, fifteen pounds lighter, blue eyes and medium auburn hair. I still have her birth and adoption certificates. Her name, at birth, was Sharon Louise Graham. Baby Graham, but I never told her about that. I guess she'll never know. I knew her as Charmaine Marie Fernie. I was managing a Radio Shack beside the Cecil Hotel. It's gone, now, but I told lies to get the job. I had to make those lies come true. That was when I first discovered I could make a living without hustling for it. I was doing stock-inventory. She came in with the kind of people you keep an eye on in a store full of valuable things. She walked to the counter and stood there, hands at her sides. An old, green jacket was on her little shoulders. She was a tiny woman. Not skinny, but slim. She had a real nice figure. I could catch an idea of that through loose jeans and a green sweater. She was looking at me so I looked up, faked my best smile, asked what I could do for her. I wasn't what I appeared to be in that suit, not by a long shot, but there was no way she could know that. She DID, though, so she said:

"I'm going to the Ambassador.

I'll be there."

She was crazy or psychic, I figured, as she turned around, walked out with her creepy friends. She ended up to be as close to psychic as I ever met. I thought she was just another street-rat honey. Free beer, a safe place to crash and obligatory tail on her mind. I wasn't much interested. I was idealistic as hell in those days. I thought making love was supposed to be involved with emotions. It took me a long time to discover getting laid is most often a matter of chance and opportunity, on both sides. I was young. Women were everywhere. Nobody appreciates the attention of a pretty girl anywhere as much as they should when they're young.

As it happened I always went to the Ambassador after work. I haven't been there for years but the place used to have a bar in the basement, under and beside the lobby. I loved it because it attracted some of the strangest creatures you'd ever find. They were, for the most part, harmless. I ran into a gambler. He had no socks. Bumming beer, cigarettes. I suppose he would have sold the beer, the cigarettes if he could, for a shot at the baccarat table in the first casino in town. He already lost his house, his wife, his job, his kids, his car and the vast majority of his dignity.

He kissed off his life to baccarat.

And his socks.

Another time there were two women across the aisle from me. One of them figured if she talked enough about her sexual expertise she might drum up some free beer. She laid a line of garbage on her girlfriend the likes of which I never heard. I wasn't buying beer or good times from scummy women that day. I left with a little Native who picked me up. Her name was Marjorie. She was pretty as hell, smart as a whip, sweet as penny candy. She was also a drug addict, part time hooker. She didn't bother to tell me that until the next morning. I didn't care. Nobody ever heard of AIDS at the time. Penicillin or tetracycline killed everything else.

I guess I met a lot of part time hookers. I used to call them 'amateurs'. The way they worked was to go to the bar, look for someone they figured they could have a good time with. It was no problem for them to sleep with a guy. It was fun. They had no sexual morality, none at all. They weren't saving themselves for marriage. Lucky thing, too. Most of them ended up in a gutter with the rest of life's dropouts. Their favourite line, as you walked by, was:

"Are you the one?" and you knew you got lucky, that night. I guess I heard that line more times than I remember. It still gives me shivers. People are inclined to figure the working girls have no feelings. That's more or less true, but lots of them are still hanging on to some of their dreams when they step onto that short street, the one with no lights that leads to a quick, deadly end. It's the drugs that get them, mostly, or some evil creep with no more conscience than a knife sharpener. The good ones don't have a pimp. They're party girls. Payment, for them, is someone who buys the beer or pays for the dope.

They supply the rest.

I knew a guy named Marvin. I called him Mad Marvin because he was, deep down, crazy as a bag of hungry rats. He was harmless, though. I liked him. We went to a zoo called the Executive House. He talked to a pretty girl in a very soft voice, formed his fingers into a circle, held it before her eyes and said, quietly:

"It's that big around." before he separated his hands, held them about eight inches apart.

"That long." he told her.

Quietly, in a soft voice.

I don't know whether she believed him. I didn't know whether to believe him. She ended up with Marvin on the other single bed in my bedroom while I tried to sleep. She didn't squeal, but she whimpered. I guess there might have been something to his story.

..continued next issue...



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OUR

VOICE

AUGUST 15

1996

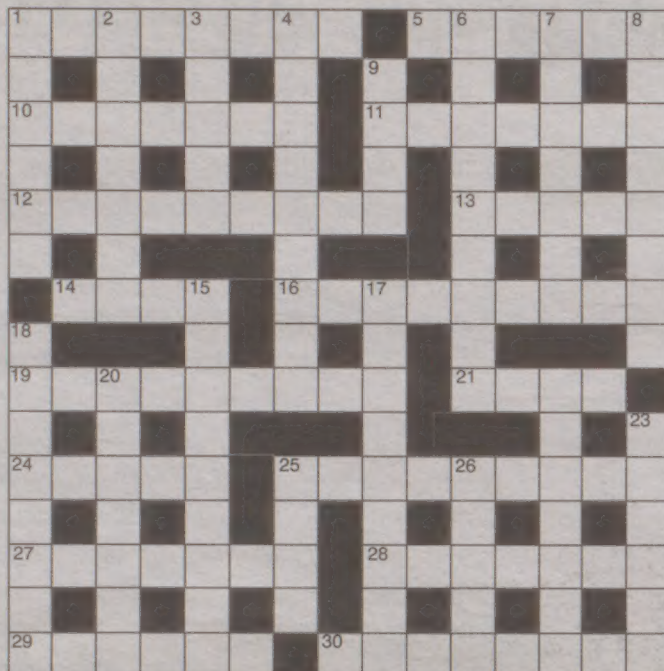


# CROSSWORD • Puzzle 39

BY SUSAN ANDREWS

## ACROSS

- 1 Periodical reading material? (8)
- 5 Not difficult, straightforward (6)
- 10 Reptiles with legs (7)
- 11 Capital of Georgia (7)
- 12 Speakers' speeches (9)
- 13 Small crown worn on state occasions (5)
- 14 A thought (4)
- 16 To expel a criminal from a country (9)
- 19 Amoebae are single-celled \_\_\_\_\_ (9)
- 21 Archaic: formerly (4)
- 24 Military slang for a problem (5)
- 25 Cracks in a wall or floor allowing others to see in (9)
- 27 \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lost Ark (7)
- 28 To pass water (7)
- 29 Popular cold luncheon meat (6)
- 30 People who got away (8)

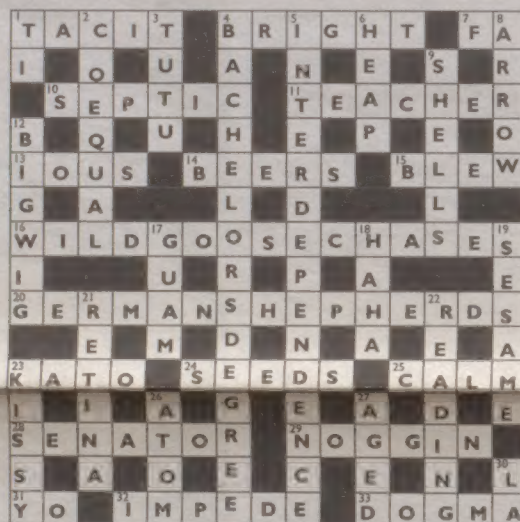


## DOWN

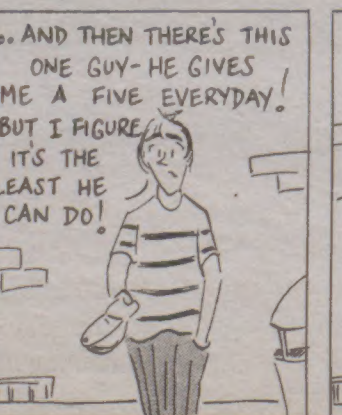
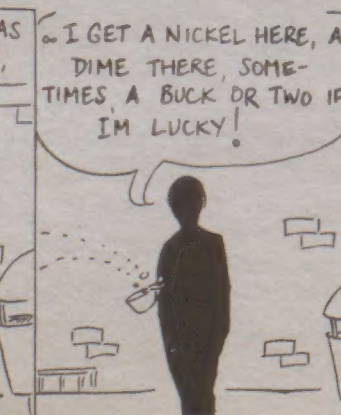
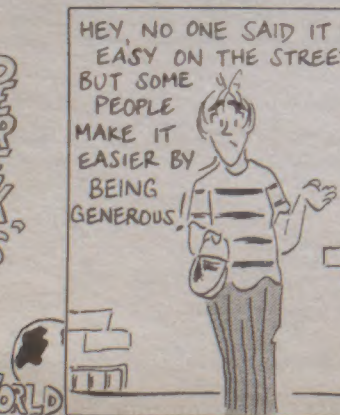
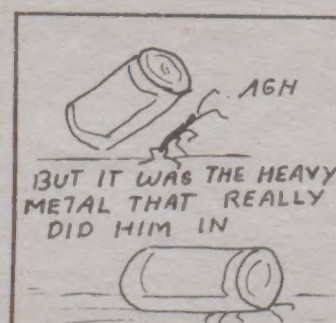
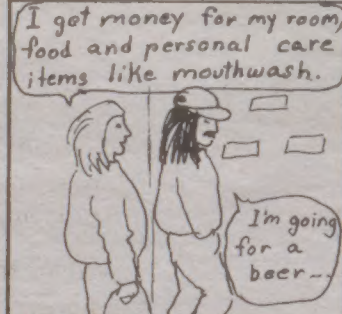
- 1 Relaxed (6)
- 2 Bird's organ for grinding food (7)
- 3 Black-clothed good guy (5)
- 4 Unpleasantness (9)
- 6 Not comfortable (3,2,4)
- 7 Resident of Northern India (7)
- 8 Gives off (8)
- 9 Containers usually made of glass (4)
- 15 Latin: to a sickening degree (2,7)
- 17 Flavourful sensory receptors (5,4)
- 18 Another name for spouses or mates (8)
- 20 Chilly stare (7)
- 22 To rescue and repair something (7)
- 23 People who show you in or out (6)
- 25 Not the present or future (4)
- 26 Emily Carr depicted this band's totem poles (5)

## Answers to September 1 Crossword #38

► Our Apologies for errors in Crossword #38 in the September 1 issue. Errors made the puzzle impossible. For frustrated puzzle solvers, the answers are published here. Puzzle 39 answers will be published in the October 1 issue of *Our Voice*.



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454-4477



## IN THEIR SHOES

# Meet the Street night puts people out in the cold

BY MICHELLE LOGAN

**W**e don't really understand the gospel until we really understand the poor," said Steve Berg, pastor responsible for community ministries at South Calgary Community Church.

On May 31, Berg and about 120 others left their real identities behind as they spent the night experiencing downtown Calgary through the eyes of a street person.

This was the first annual "Meet the Street" night sponsored by the Mustard Seed Street Ministry, which is dedicated to meeting the needs of the homeless.

The street-a-thon raised over \$32,000, as participants solicited people to sponsor them for making it through the night.

"I was impacted by the incredible loneliness" as well as the feeling that "nobody gives a damn," said Berg after the experience.

To help participants "get a handle" on the experience of homeless people, each person who signed up was given an envelope with a description of the background, situation and identifying characteristics of a derelict, runaway, prostitute or mentally ill person. The information was based on actual people who have sought help from the Mustard Seed.

Participants Kelly and Jacqueline Miquelon prepared for the part by making sure they were rough-looking.

"I've been downtown in a suit before, and people will open doors for you. But it's amazing, how you're dressed changes people's outlook," Kelly said.

He described the people he encountered as "standoffish with a judgmental look in their face, as though you were much less of a person than they were . . . I found it very humbling to see what it was like on the other side of the fence.

"Downtown is all money; the buildings seem to drip with it, and it made me wonder," Kelly mused. "I'm sure (the homeless) must build up resentment."

His wife Jacqueline added, "There's no reason for anyone to be homeless in our wealthy society."

The Miquelons acquired a picture of the downtown at night as very cold physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Melody Dyck, a grade 12 student who has been volunteering at the Mustard Seed for the past two years also took part.

"When you're down at 'The Seed' you see it from your own perspective, but

while you're on the street, you are seeing it through their eyes," Dyck said.

"It was hard 'cause you were cold all the time," she added.

Hazel Turcotte said, "We did a lot of walking. We survived. We found places to get warm and places to go to the bathroom. In some ways, it could be seen as a bit of a lark, and it was fun, but we only got a tiny glimpse of what it was like, and it's totally different if you have a home to go back to."

Jan Brown, the member of Parliament for Calgary Southeast, was dared to take part by a constituent. She was reassured about security concerns when she learned participants were to go out in mixed-gender teams of three.

Recalling how cold and tired she was by 5 a.m., Brown said, "That was the most excruciating experience of my life."



**ALL NIGHT ON THE STREET**  
for Susan Scott of the *Calgary Herald*, Del Bonnerman of the *Mustard Seed* and Ed Johnston, president of the *United Way*.

Brown related that at one point a prostitute recognized her and said, "Hi, Jan."

"How do you know who I am?" Brown asked.

"I read the papers too, you know," responded the hooker whom Jan learned was part of her constituency.

Phil, associate director at the Mustard Seed, said the fund raising was secondary to people gaining an understanding of who lives in the streets and how we can better serve them.

"We got a glimpse into it," one participant observed. "But we didn't really experience it. We got to come home, and they're still there, and now I understand that I don't understand."

*Reprinted from City Light News*

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OUR

VOICE

SEPTEMBER 15

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## AIDS WALKS ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

### CALGARY

Calgary's AIDS Walk will be held on Sunday, September 29 in Prince's Island Park. Registration: 10 am Eau Claire YMCA. Walk begins at 11 am on either a five-kilometer or ten-kilometer course. Entertainment en route, food vendors and fact boards with info about AIDS. Channel 7 news anchor Nirmala Naidoo-Hill will walk the course on behalf of those unable to participate. Phone 541-9255 for a pledge form or to sponsor Nirmala.

### EDMONTON

The Edmonton AIDS Walk on Sunday, September 29 will be in Kinsmen Park. The walk starts between 12 and 12:15 and goes through the River Valley to Government House and back. For information and pledge forms call: 488-5742.

The Walk benefits the AIDS Network, Edmonton Person's Living with HIV Society: Living Positive. Feather of Hope Aboriginal AIDS Prevention Society, Interfaith Association on AIDS.

### WINNIPEG

The Winnipeg AIDS Walk will be in Memorial Park at Memorial Boulevard and Broadway. The walk will be 1.4 kilometers long. Also on Sunday, the 29th, registration is at 1 pm, the walk begins at 2 pm. Participant and sponsorship kits are available at Partners Group or any Winnipeg Liquor Mart. Join with 800 participants for the 1996 walk.

For more information call 1-800-705-WALK.